

Message Text

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PAGE 01 BEIRUT 06497 211844Z

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ACTION NODS-00

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 /001 W

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Z 211822Z JUL 76

FM AMEMBASSY BEIRUT

TO SECSTATE WASHDC FLASH 1269

INFO AMEMBASSY CAIRO FLASH

AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS FLASH

334-/AMEMBASSY JIDDA FLASH 8835

S E C R E T BEIRUT 6497

EXDIS

DEPT TREAT AS NODIS

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: AEMR, PFOR, MILI, LE

SUBJECT: PLO TURNS DOWN SATURDAY CONVOY

1. AT 1900 HOURS JULY 21, RSO MET WITH PLO SECURITY OFFICIAL, ABU JAAFER, TO CONFIRM SATURDAYS PROPOSED CONVOY TO DAMASCUS. ABU JAAFAER SAID CATEGORICALLY THAT SATURDAY IS NOT RPT NOT A GOOD DAY BECAUSE SECURITY STIATUION IN BEIRUT IS UNSTABLE. HE WOULD NOT PROPOSE ALTERNATE AND SAID PLO WOULD INFORM US WHEN TIME IS RIGHT.

2. WHEN RSO TRIED TO PIN HIM DOWN ABOUT SECURITY CONDITIONS ALONG PROPOSED CONVOY ROUTE TO DMASCUS, ABU JAAFER HEDGED AND WOULD ONLY REPEAT THAT GENERAL SECURITY SITUATION HERE IS NOT RPT NOT GOOD.

3. IN DISCUSSING PARTICULARS OF SECURITY SITUATION, HE MENTIONED FOLLOWING: (A) ASSAD'S SPEECH, WHICH HE CHARACTERIZED AS UNHELPFUL AND CONCERNING WHICH HE NOTED THAT ASSAD HAD REFERRED TO THE UNITED STATES (WITHOUT INDICATING EXACTLY WHAT HE MEANT); (B) UNCERTAINTY SURROUNDING PLO DELEGATION WHICH HAS DEPARTED FOR DAMASCUS, ABU JAAFER EXPRESSING HOPE THAT DISCUSSIONS WITH SYRIA WOULD GO WELL--"OTHERWISE THINGS WILL GET VERY BAD"; (C) UNSUCCESSFUL EVACUATION OF WOUNDED FROM TELL ZAATAR TODAY DESPITE AGREEMENT BETWEEN PHALANGE AND PLO; AND (D) ALLEGED SHELLING OF SABRA

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CAMP BETWEEN 0400 AND 0800 TODAY.

4. IN CONNECTION WITH ASSAD SPEECH, ABU JAAFER NOTED THAT ASSAD HAD STATED THAT PRESIDENT FRANGIE HAD INVITED SYRIANS IN. HE CONTINUED BY SAYING THAT IF SYRIANS ARE TREATING FRANGIE AS LEGITIMATE HEAD OF LEBANON, THERE IS NO HOPE.

5. RE SPECIFICS OF EVACUATION, ABU JAAFER PROPOSED NO ALTERNATIVE ROUTE AND WHEN QUERIED WHETHER SIZE OF CONVOY BOTHERED HIM, HE SAID SIZE MADE NO DIFFERENCE.

6. AT CLOSE OF MEETING ABU JAAFER TOLD RSO THAT HE HOPED THIS "PARTICULAR PROBLEM" WOULD NOT PREVENT US FROM COMING TO DISCUSS OTHER PROBLEMS (PRESUMABLY MY SECURITY AS I MOVE AROUND TOWN).

7. COMMENT: QUITE CLEARLY, PLO IS HOLDING CONVOY AS HOSTAGE AND HAS BEEN USING EXCUSE OF INSECURITY ALONG CONVOY ROUTE AS MEANS OF KEEPING CONVOY FROM LEAVING FOR DAMASCUS.
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